

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4090

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MILITARY SITUATION

REF: DAO TEL AVIV 1875 OCTOBER 73

1. FOLLOWING INFORMATION COMES FROM USINT SOURCE, AND IS
VALID AS OF 0100 OCTOBER 22, 1973:

2. EGYPTIAN MILITARY COMMAND BELIEVES THAT THREAT FROM
ISRAELI TASK FORCE ON WEST BANK OF CANAL HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY
ELIMINATED. DURING FIRST TWO-THREE DAYS OF IDF PENETRATION,
ISRAELIS WERE ABLE TO PUT ACROSS THREE ARMORED BRIGADES (ABOUT
300 TANKS), BUT DETERMINED RESISTANCE HAS BROKEN IDF TASK
FORCE'S BACK. ONE BRIGADE WHICH HAD MOVED TO ABU SUWEIR
AREA ON OCTOBER 19 HAD SUFFERED 32 TANKS DESTROYED, AND
32 CAPTURED; REMAINING 36 ESCAPED TO FAYID. AT PRESENT ABOUT
100 TANKS, REMNANTS OF IDF FORCE, ARE IN FAYID AREA AND ARE
COMPLETELY ENCIRCLED BY EGYPTIAN FORCES. THREE ISRAELI BRIDGES
WHICH HAD BEEN PLACED ACROSS CANAL BETWEEN LAKE TIMSAH AND
GREAT BITTER LAKE WERE DESTROYED BY MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT. IDF HAS
PASSED MESSAGE TO EGYPTIAN COMMAND ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO
MOVE REMAINING IDF FORCES ON WEST BANK BACK TO CANAL AND ACROSS
INTO SINAI UNHINDERED, BUT EGYPTIAN COMMAND HAS REFUSED AND WILL
ONLY ACCEPT TOTAL SURRENDER. SOURCE STATES THAT UNLESS THIS
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ISRAELI FORCE HAS SURRENDERED, CHANCES FOR GOE ACCEPTANCE
OF CEASEFIRE ARE SLIGHT. (AS OF TIME OF INFORMATION, UNSC
HAD NOT CONVENED.)

3. REGARDING CEASEFIRE AND PEACE SETTLEMENT EFFORTS, SOURCE STATED THAT KOSYGIN VISIT CAME AS DIRECT RESULT OF US/USSR UNDERSTANDING ON GENERAL TERMS OF AGREEMENT. KOSYGIN AND SADAT REACHED AGREEMENT ON FOLLOWING POINTS:

- (A) CEASEFIRE IN PLACE;
- (B) TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO PRE-JUNE 5, 1967 BOUNDARIES;
- (C) ESTABLISHMENT OF DMZ'S ON EITHER SIDE OF ISRAELI BORDER IN SINAI;
- (D) A US/USSR MIXED POLICE FORCE TO OPERATE IN BORDER AREA;
- (E) SHARM EL-SHEIKH TO BE PLACE UNDER SUPERVISION OF US/USSR FORCE;
- (F) SUEZ CANAL TO BE OPENED TO INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING, INCLUDING ISRAELI, AS SOON AS IT IS CLEARED.

THROUGHOUT FIRST PART OF KOSYGIN/SADAT TALKS, SADAT MAINTAINED FIRM POSITION THAT WITHDRAWAL SHOULD OCCUR BEFORE CEASEFIRE. KOSYGIN INSISTED THAT CEASEFIRE SHOULD OCCUR FIRST, FOLLOWED BY WITHDRAWAL, AND HE PREVAILED. SOURCE STATED THAT GOE BELIEVES THESE TERMS ARE ACCEPTABLE TO US AND CONSIDERES THAT US AGREEMENT WILL BE BINDING ON ISRAEL. GOE SEES REMAINING MAJOR PROBLEM TO BE THAT OF PALESTINIANS, BUT BELIEVES THIS ASPECT MUST BE SETTLED IN UN FRAMEWORK.

4. COMMENT: WE ARE REPORTING ABOVE COMMENTS ON EGYPTIAN MILITARY SITUATION BECAUSE OF THEIR EXTREME DISCREPANCY WITH IDF BRIEFER'S REMARKS, NOT IN SPITE OF IT. THERE IS SIMPLY NO WAY TO MATCH THIS REPORT WITH DAO TEL AVIV SITREP OF YESTERDAY EVENING (REFTEL). NEVERTHELESS, USINT SOURCE'S REMARKS FIT WITH CONTINUED MOOD OF OPTIMISM ABOUT MILITARY SITUATION WITHIN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL COMMAND, AND
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WITH TENOR OF BRIEFING GIVEN YESTERDAY BY EGYPTIAN ARMY GENERAL MUKHTAR TO FOREIGN PRESS CORPS.

5. ONE OBVIOUS EXPLANATION IS THAT EGYPTIANS ARE SUCCEEDING IN GIVING A CONVINCINGLY BOLD FRONT AT MOMENT OF CRISIS. ANOTHER IS THAT MILITARY IS NOT COMMUNICATING EXTENT OF EGYPTIAN LOSS TO POLITICIANS. YET TODAY GOE HAS ARRANGED FOR SELECT GROUP OF CORRESPONDENTS, INCLUDING DE BORCHGRAVE AND BBC CREW, TO VISIT FAYID AREA TO SEE SITUATION FOR THEMSELVES. THIS VISIT WILL CLEARLY BE IMPOSSIBLE IF IDF CONTROLS TERRITORY THAT IT CLAIMS. MOREOVER, THERE APPEAR TO BE SLIGHT ANOMALIES IN SITUATION AS REPORTED BY IDF. FIRST, HAS IDF CUT CAIRO-ISMAILIYA ROAD? "TRACE OF IDF

PENETRATION" AS GIVEN IN PARA 4B OF REFTEL SUGGESTS NOT. SECOND, DOES "TRACE" DEFINE IDF POSITION NOW HELD, OR MAXIMUM EXTENT OF PENETRATION BY ANY IDF UNIT WITHIN PAST WEEK? THIRDLY, HAS THERE BEEN ANY INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION OF EXTENT OF IDF PENETRATION? AP HAS REPORTED STORY FILED YESTERDAY BY CORRESPONDENT ATTACHED TO IDF UNITS IN EGYPT, BUT STORY SUGGESTS THAT CORRESPONDENT GOT ONLY AS FAR AS EGYPTIAN BUNKER ON EDGE OF CANAL NEAR DEVERSOIR, AND HIS ROUTE TO AREA (OVERLAND? HELICOPTER?) APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY FUDGED. ARE THERE OTHER CORRESPONDENTS WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO REPORT MORE FULLY?

6. WE HAVE COME TO ASSUME THAT IDF INFORMATION IS THE BEST; IN FACT, IT PROBABLY IS. IT MAY BE WORTH RAISING SUGGESTION, HOWEVER, THAT ISRAELIS ARE ATTEMPTING TO LAY BASIS FOR POLITICAL CONDITIONS FOLLOWING CEASEFIRE BY CREATING SOMEWHAT ILLUSORY FACTS.
SMITH

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